Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Annual Accountability Report for the Fiscal Year 2011-2012

Report DNR 2012-003
August 2012

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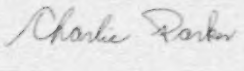
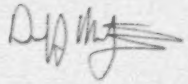
1 Accountability Statement

The accountability report of the Department of Natural Resources, for the year ended March 31, 2012, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Natural Resources' Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year 2011-2012. The reporting of Department of Natural Resources outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by department management and staff.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of Department of Natural Resources management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Natural Resources' 2011-2012 Statement of Mandate.



The Honourable Charlie Parker
Minister of Natural Resources



Mr. Duff Montgomerie
Deputy Minister of Natural Resources

2 Message From The Minister

It is my pleasure to present the Accountability Report of the Department of Natural Resources for 2011-12. There were many achievements made during the course of the year and major challenges were encountered.

The Path We Share, A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020 was released in August 2011. This strategy is the cornerstone of our plan to meet the challenges for natural resources management that lie ahead.

Nova Scotians said that sustainability, transparency, diversity, collaboration, and informed decision making are key values. The strategy is about doing things differently, and it reflects what Nova Scotians told us. It will bring a new and balanced approach to natural resources management that will be a significant change from the past, and that will guide us for the next ten years. This approach is essential if we are to ensure that the province's natural resources are to be sustained for our collective economic, environmental and social benefit.

The strategy will mark a time of transformation in our province. Collaboration and partnerships, research and knowledge-sharing, and focused outreach will be integral parts of the new strategy. How we manage Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forests, geological resources and provincial parks will be guided by this strategy..

I would like to take this opportunity to mention some of the department's most significant accomplishments from the past fiscal year. These included:

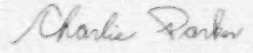
- supporting, as a provincial initiative, a seven point forestry infrastructure plan, that included funding for silviculture, wood harvesting and stockpiling, Crown land road maintenance, and establishment of a forest contractor training program.
- investments in training and outreach for woodlot owners, private land silviculture, and tree harvesting tracking, monitoring and compliance in order to help reduce the use of the clearcut harvest method to no more than 50% of the total harvest within the next five years.
- investing in land purchases that increase the Crown land base or will help the province meet the 12% land protection goal in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.
- protecting the sustainability of our forests by lowering the cap on the annual amount of new forest biomass that can be used to generate electricity to 350,000 dry tonnes.
- streamlining the process to release ownership of ungranted Crown lands.
- providing online tools and information to help woodland owners network with each other, to help promote sustainable woodlot management.
- extending the four-part plan to increase awareness and make communities safer from aggressive coyotes.

- reaching agreement with the federal government to make Sable Island a national park reserve.
- celebrating the 40th anniversary of Nova Scotia's tradition of donating a Christmas tree to the City of Boston for their annual Christmas tree tradition.

I would again like to express my sincere thanks to the many Nova Scotians who contributed to the development of the natural resources strategy. As we move forward with the implementation of the strategy, I call on those who have an interest in and care about our natural resources management to work with us to build the culture of shared stewardship called for in the strategy.

I encourage readers to visit the department's web site at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr to view the natural resources strategy, the action plan that accompanies it, and a range of information on the department's many programs and services.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Charlie Parker
Minister of Natural Resources

3 Financial Results

Financial information is provided in the table shown below based on the department's organizational structure.

Department of Natural Resources Budget Context			
	2011-12		
	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Program and Service Area	**$'000**	**$'000**	**$'000**
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	516	652	136
Corporate Services Unit	4,625	3,851	(774)
Renewable Resources	16,114	30,197	14,083
Mineral Resources	3,633	3,644	11
Regional Services	59,886	54,941	(4,945)
Policy, Planning and Support Services	4,704	4,387	(317)
Land Services	3,367	3,573	206
Total - Gross Departmental Expenses	92,845	101,245	8,400
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	6,910	11,859	4,949
Fees and Other Charges	1,981	2,144	163
Ordinary Recoveries	20	993	973
TCA Purchase Requirements	6,800	34,395	27,595
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	**823**	**742**	**(81)**

The department spent $8.4 million, or 9.0 per cent more than budget. The increased spending was the result of the ongoing measures to mitigate the economic impact caused by the shutdown and proposed sale of the Port Hawkesbury paper mill. The measures were intended to maintain critical capacity and forest management services to facilitate the potential sale and subsequent re-startup of mill operations.

Ordinary revenue was $4.9 million higher than budgeted due primarily to $3.2 million in wood sales relating to the Port Hawkesbury paper mill.

Actual TCA purchases were $27.6 million higher than budgeted due primarily to $25 million in lands purchased from Bowater Mersey.

4 Performance Measures

The department has identified a number of performance measures that help track success in meeting our goals. The department recognizes that a more comprehensive performance tracking system is required. With implementation of the Natural Resources Strategy now underway, the department will be developing new performance measures that track and report on our progress in attaining our Strategy objectives.

Three new measures were added in the department's 2012-13 Statement of Mandate and results will be reported in next year's Accountability Report. These measures are:

- percentage of forested land harvested using clearcut harvest method
- provincial camping park occupancy rate (core season)
- quality of geological databases

Information on each of the measures shown in the 2011-12 Statement of Mandate is provided in the following sections. For each measure, a brief description is provided that indicates what that measure tells us, where we are now (latest results available), and where we want to be (future target values and target years). Data for the measures is generated within the department or is from surveys conducted by the Public Service Commission.

4.1 Natural Resources Stewardship Training

Outcome - Knowledgeable Teachers and Youth

Providing natural resources stewardship training to the public, educators and youth and helping them to understand relevant issues promotes sound natural resources stewardship. It is also important to expose these groups to important stewardship concepts that they may use and pass along to others. The desired outcome is knowledgeable teachers and youth.

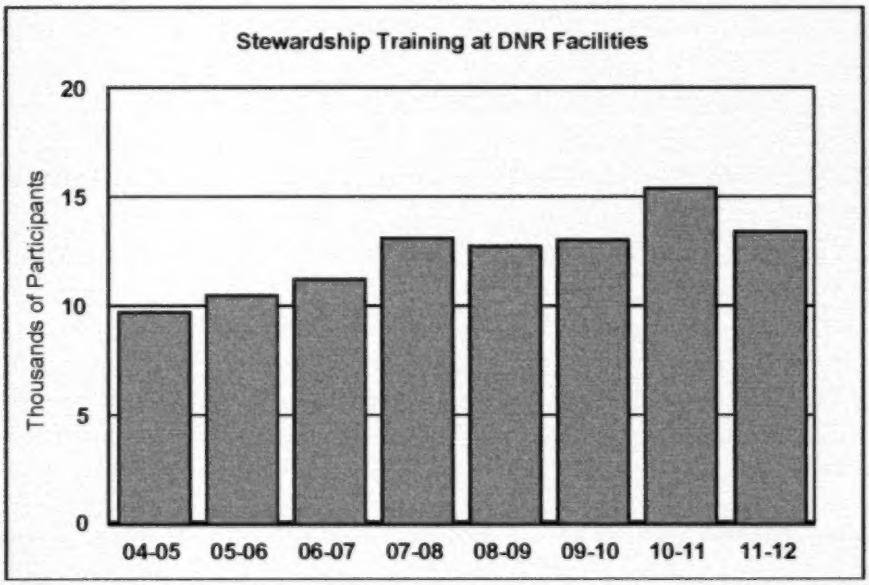
What does the measure tell us?

The measure reflects the number of teachers, adult leaders, students and youth who have participated in one of the natural resources programs through either the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park or the Natural Resources Education Centre (NREC) annually. At the Wildlife Park training is delivered on-site in two classrooms in combination with the captive

indigenous wildlife at the Park and is an integral part of the provincial science curriculum. Webfoot (wetlands) education programs through Ducks Unlimited Canada have been added to the complement of nature based education programs offered at the Wildlife Park. The NREC programs take place both on-site and off-site. On-site visits at NREC take place in two classrooms, and on trails on the 120 acre property, as well at the rustic lodge at Chaswood and trails on the 450 acre property. Programs are interactive and usually include post-visit activities. As a result of the visits and participation in the programs, attendees should gain a heightened understanding of natural resource issues which will contribute to the development of a stewardship ethic.

Where are we now?

During 2011-12, 13,392 individuals participated in training through either the Wildlife Park or the NREC, a decrease of 12.9% from the previous year. The cost of busing classes to these facilities, and poor weather were contributing factors to the decline in numbers.



Where do we want to be?

The department's target for this measure was 13,000 individuals for 2011-12. An increased effort is being placed on reaching teachers, students, youth and youth educators who reside outside of the core service area (within a one hour drive of the two facilities) through distance-learning support, in-service training, and outreach activities. High motive fuel prices, which makes the cost of transportation and travel relatively expensive, continues to adversely affect the number of visitors to these two facilities.

4.2 Required Value of Silviculture on Private and Industrial Lands Completed

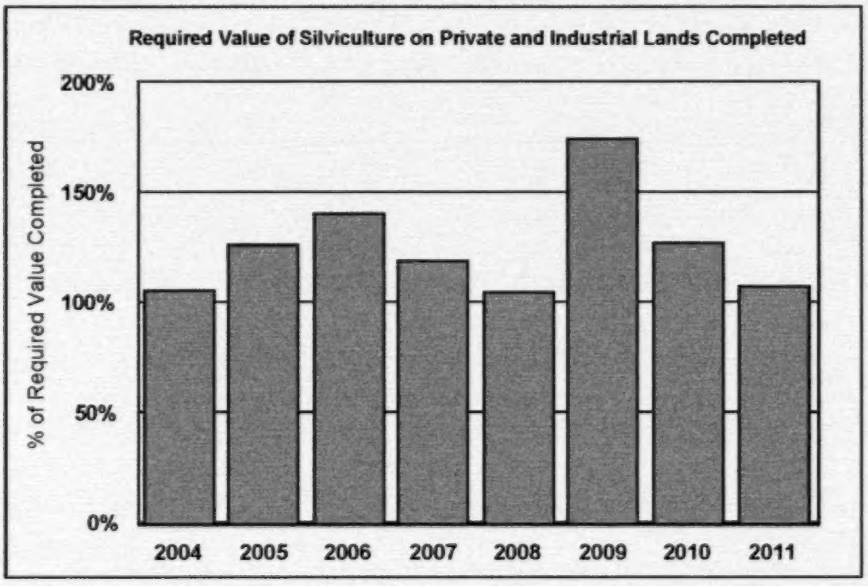
Outcome - Effective Management of Resource Supply

Wood supply sustainability can be managed effectively through an aggressive silviculture program. The department monitors wood harvesting and forecasts long-term wood supply by incorporating both harvesting and silviculture data into the forecast. During the last decade there has been much pressure placed on private woodlots to support the provincial demand for wood. Maintaining an adequate level of silviculture will help to provide for a future supply of wood on private woodlots. The desired outcome is the effective management of wood resource supply.

What does this measure tell us?

The measure helps to explain whether the level of silviculture activity being reported by wood buyers meets or exceeds the required amount (as per the requirements of the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*). A ratio of 100% means that the level of silviculture reported equals the amount of silviculture activity required under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*.

Where are we now?



During the calendar year 2011, figures indicate that approximately 9.1 million silviculture credits were required and about 9.8 million credits were claimed (which included 1.0 million

administrative credits). As a result, completed silviculture was 107% of the amount required under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*.

Where do we want to be?

The department's target for this measure for 2011 was 100% or greater (this measure is calculated on a calendar year basis). As long as this measure exceeds 100%, the amount of actual silviculture work being claimed is greater than the amount which is required (under the *Forest Sustainability Regulations*). Each year the target for this measure will remain at 100% or greater.

4.3 Endangered and Threatened Species with Recovery Plans in Place

Outcome - Species Diversity

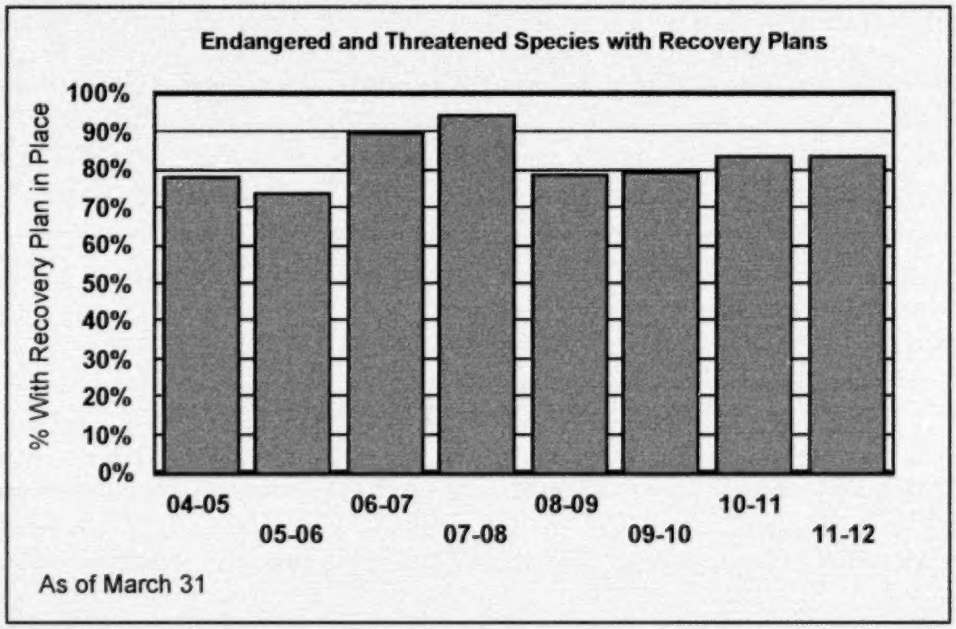
The department is committed to the conservation and protection of species at risk, provincially and nationally, through the *Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act* and the *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*.

What does the measure tell us?

The measure is an indicator of how much work is being done to restore the health of endangered and threatened species. Recovery plans are the focal instrument for addressing the recovery needs for species at risk and guide governments, recovery teams and others, in their conservation efforts, and are now being prepared as required by the *Endangered Species Act*. Recovery plans establish, for each endangered and threatened species, what needs to be done, how much it will cost, when it will be done and who will do the work. The plans also set goals for what is required to down-list a species at risk and establish a strategy for attaining these goals. To down-list a species means to move it to a lower risk category. New species are listed periodically under the *Endangered Species Act*. Recovery plans are required to be in place for each endangered species within one year after the species was listed, and within two years for those species listed as being threatened.

Where are we now?

As of March 31, 2012, 24 species were listed as either endangered or threatened. Of these 24 species, all 24 of them were required to have a recovery plan in place by March 31, 2012 and 20 of them, or 83%, did have a recovery plan in place as of that date. Recovery plan development is being led by Environment Canada for three of the species without completed plans in place. These species are the Red Knot, the Chimney Swift, and the Common Nighthawk.



Where do we want to be?

Our annual target is to have required recovery plans in place for all (100%) species listed under the Act. Completion is, in part, dependent on the resources and timelines. Revisions to completed plans are also occurring periodically in order to incorporate new information and knowledge that becomes available. Since we have been assessing species under the *Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act* only the Peregrine Falcon has shown significant recovery and was down-listed from Threatened to Vulnerable in 2007.

From Strategy to Action, An Action Plan for the Path We Share, A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia, released in August 2011, included as an action to be started within 12 months, that there would be a review of recovery plans for species at risk, and resources would be reallocated so that more species at risk can be recovered.

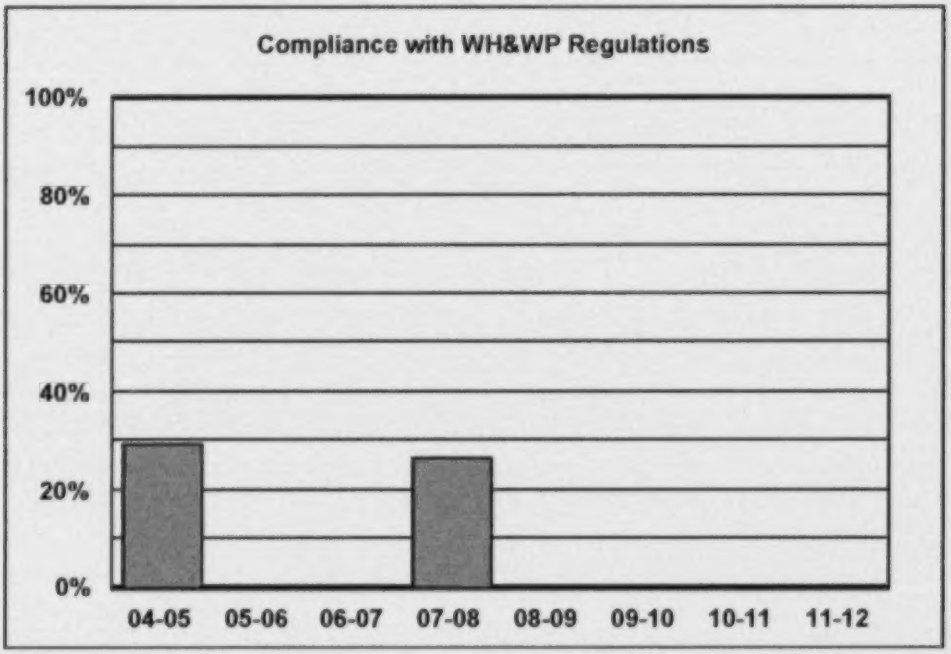
4.4 Compliance with the *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations*

Outcome - Conservation of Ecosystem Function

The *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* (under the *Forests Act*) were developed to maintain fish and wildlife habitats and water quality in and near forest harvesting operations on all lands. There are three requirements: reduced harvesting along watercourses in Special Management Zones, clumps of living trees left standing in the harvest site, and large pieces of woody debris left evenly scattered in the site.

What does the measure tell us?

The percentage of harvesting operations meeting the legal standards shows how well natural environments are being protected and the forest operators' knowledge of, and commitment to, environmental stewardship. A sample of harvest sites is used to measure compliance with the Regulations. The desired outcome is conservation of ecosystem function.



Where are we now?

The Regulations came into effect early in 2002. Surveys of harvest sites were done in 2004-05 and 2007-08. The last results, from 2007-08, showed that about 26% of these sites were in full compliance. Undertaking the survey is a significant task that requires about three person-years of staff time. With the development of a natural resources strategy underway, and because the survey results were not expected to show a significant change from the previous survey, a decision was made to discontinue the survey in 2010.

The cost and effort required to carry out the survey of harvest sites has made it difficult to obtain data needed for this measure. As a result, this measure has been dropped from the 2012-13 Statement of Mandate. The requirements to leave tree clumps and woody debris for wildlife habitat and the protection of riparian zones continues to be promoted, and enforcement action taken when necessary.

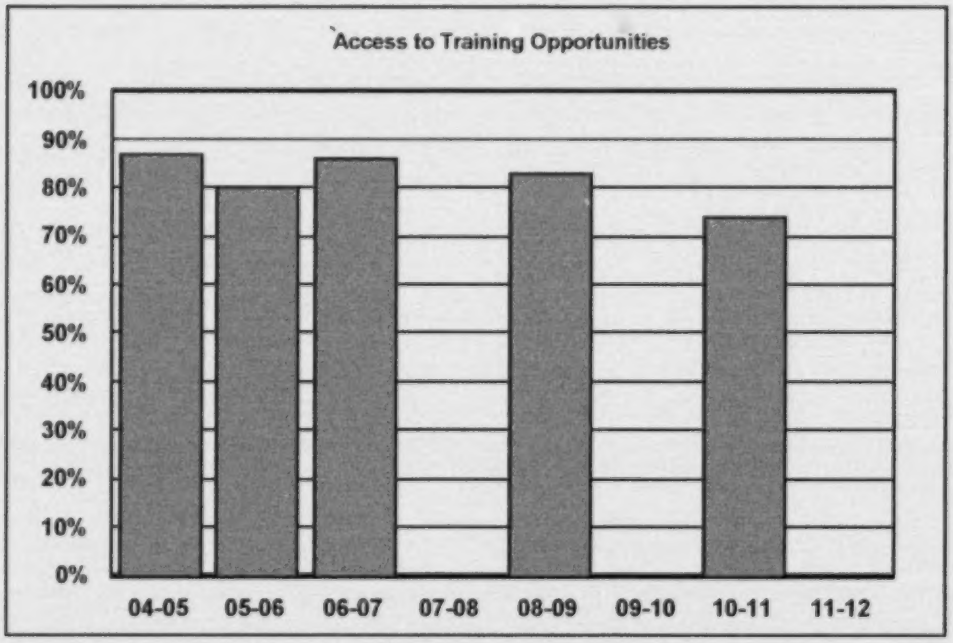
4.5 Percent of Employees That Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree That The Department Creates a Safe Work Environment

Outcome - Safe Staff and Workplaces

The Public Service Commission surveys employees of the Nova Scotia Government on a regular basis. One of the questions in the How's Work Going survey asks whether the department creates a safe work environment for its employees.

What does the measure tell us?
This measure reports the estimated percentage of the department's employees (based on the survey results) that gave a favourable response to the question (either they somewhat agreed or they strongly agreed that the department provides a safe work environment for its employees).

Where are we now?



No survey was undertaken in 2012. The latest survey was administered in March 2011 (no survey was done in 2008 or 2010). The department's result for this question, from the 2011 survey, was 79%, down nine percentage point from the 88% achieved in the March 2009 survey. The 79% result was six percentage points higher than the 73% achieved corporately by respondents from all departments and agencies. Even though there was a decline, this

was an area of clear strength of the department as a score of 60% to 74% reflects an area of strength and a score of 75% or higher reflects an area of clear strength.

Where do we want to be?
The department had set a target of 89% for the results of the 2011 survey based on the 2007 survey results and 89% is the target for the 2013 survey results. The reasons for the decline in the 2011 result need to be identified and corrective steps taken early enough in the 2012-13 fiscal year to see improved results in the next survey, which is scheduled for in later that fiscal year.

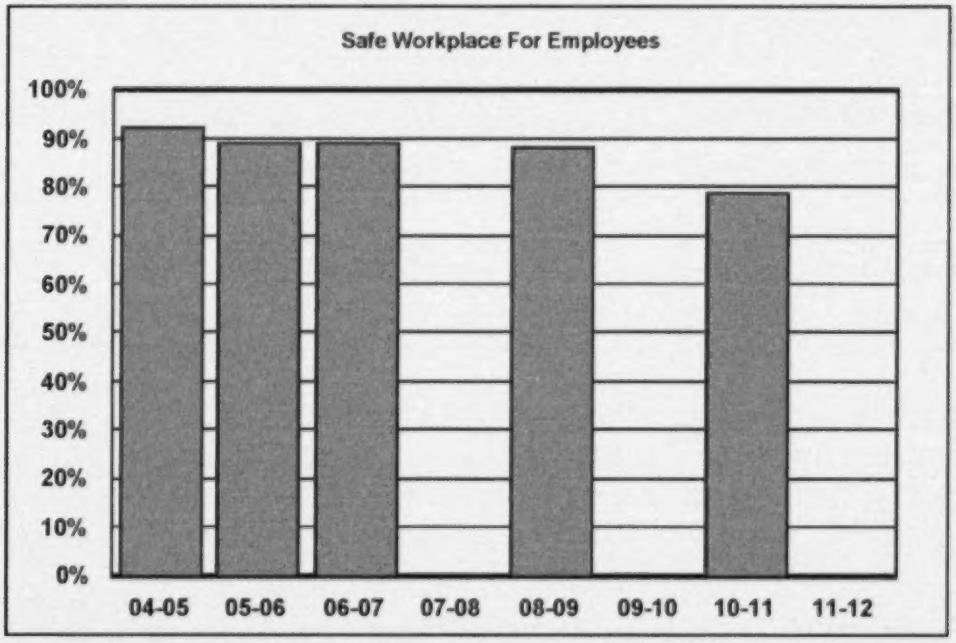
4.6 Percent of Employees That Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree That They Have Access to Training Opportunities

Outcome - Knowledgeable Staff

The Public Service Commission surveys employees of the Nova Scotia Government on a regular basis. One of the questions in the How's Work Going survey asks whether the employee has access to training opportunities.

What does the measure tell us?
This measure reports the estimated percentage of the department's employees (based on the survey results) that gave a favourable response to the question (either they somewhat agreed or they strongly agreed that they have access to training opportunities). The desired outcome is knowledgeable staff.

Where are we now?
No survey was undertaken in 2012. The latest survey was administered in March 2011 The department's result for this question, from the 2011 survey, was 74%, down nine percentage points from the 83% achieved in the March 2009 survey. Although DNR's 2011 result was a decline from the result in 2009, the 74% figure was still twelve percentage points higher than the 62% achieved corporately by respondents from all departments and agencies. Even though there was a decline, this was an area of strength for the department as a score of 60% to 74% reflects an area of strength and a score of 75% or higher reflects an area of clear strength.



Where do we want to be?

The department had set a target of 86% for the results of the 2011 survey based on the 2007 survey results and 86% is the target for the 2013 survey results. The reasons for the decline in the 2011 result need to be identified and corrective steps taken early enough in 2012-13 fiscal year to see improved results in the next survey, which is scheduled for later in that fiscal year.